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AUTHOR Jutras, Phillip F.
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ABSTRACT

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**School Change from the Inside:
Examining the Change Process in Schools**

**Phillip F. Jutras
Regis College, Weston, Massachusetts
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School Change from the Inside

Abstract

The process of how innovations develop from ideas and as responses to needs within a middle school setting is the focus of this study. The dynamics of influence and leadership behavior which contribute to school wide innovations is examined. The study findings highlight the importance of strategic thinking and to the creation of integrating devices within the middle school structure. The focus on behavior and strategies which stimulated and guided ideas to implementation had several important results. Innovations that had clear student benefits and which were crafted by teachers developed momentum and attracted growing support. Further, the by-products of innovation were often as substantial as the intended outputs. Included among the more significant by-products of innovation in these two schools was increased psychological energy and a sense of individual and organizational learning. Teachers, in particular, report on the acquisition of new organizational (project management) and influence skills as unanticipated outcomes of innovation efforts. The cost of innovation in these schools is also noted as change produces tension and often polarizing factions which must be anticipated and dealt with in order to bring about effective implementation.

School Change from the Inside: Examining the Innovation Process in Schools

Introduction:

This is a descriptive field study of innovation in two middle schools. It represents both a direct look at the dynamics surrounding change from within a school as well as the connections which innovations make toward the broader view of change and school revitalization. Throughout the process of gathering data, I was conscious of specific variables and therefore made certain assumptions about key change elements of structure (formal organizational arrangement), culture (social systems), task (the operation of teaching/learning), individual (attitudes and skills) as well as leadership action (the ability to bring people and resources together to solve problems and pursue opportunities). I was also conscious of three broad stages of innovation. Ideas and proposals lead to early adoption, implementation and eventually stabilization.

Method:

In investigating leadership and organizational factors which promote or inhibit innovation, I sought to view leadership action from informal (influence without authority) as well as formal (authority based) sources. Innovations refer to internally produced changes which are new, novel, and unique to the school and which move from ideas to implementation and actual application. Within these two middle school sites, I was open to learning about innovations in a variety of forms, including change in program, teaching, technology or structure. The Nadler (1985) framework of organizational change (structure, culture, individual and task) helped guide my early thinking as I attempted to structure my data gathering.

I collected data at two school sites. I chose to study innovation in middle schools where it was reported that change was ongoing. The data collection and observation process consisted of spending two full days in each school after several initial meetings for orientation and scheduling of interviews. At the West and Shepard Middle Schools, I conducted semi-structure interviews with more than twenty professional staff. I also collected unobtrusive data in the form of school surveys, meeting minutes, program guides and school news bulletins. I attended several faculty meetings and faculty council meetings. My observations beyond the context of the interview settings were made from touring the schools, meeting the teachers in the lunch room and visiting the school libraries, cafeterias and gymnasiums.

Reflections on Innovation:

As I concluded my final visits to the two middle schools, I had a number of immediate reflections about change in schools. A dominant reaction was the impact of

leadership actions as guiding sources of change and innovation. These principals had a strong sense of themselves. With mature egos, they attacked the job of education with a commitment that was recognizable to all members of the organization. While their emotional range varied from a cool, detached style to a more engaged approach, the ability to jump start ideas and build a permanent process of change was most apparent.

Similarly, the faculty members (early adopters) who ignited the early stages of change, exercised a high degree of influence. They developed skills and strategies on the fly, their confidence grew with each new demand, each point of resistance and with each small measure of progress. Studs Tercal once wrote "people are bigger than their jobs." This was strikingly apparent when I probed the experience and motivation of the teachers who were invested in managing innovations. "We are recycling human potential...we can do things." "I feel more knowledgeable than ever before...I see the whole school as my domain not just the classroom." "It works because it comes from teachers...It focuses on students."

These responses and the comments contained in this report from teachers and administrators at the Shepard and West Middle Schools are part of the mosaic of change which people paint by their actions and choice making. These actions and decisions, while far from being a completed answer to the problems of middle school education, may be representative of how revitalization and commitment increase potential for individual and organizational learning. As they are still at the early stages of change, the educators in these schools may not yet comprehend how deep the improvement process can penetrate.

What made a difference in initiating and sustaining good ideas and turning them into applications? I found that structural changes enabled schools to produce collaborative and collegial efforts. Structure or formal organizational arrangements included integrating devices (teams/task forces), which were used to secure and tap the diversity of opinion present in the schools. The establishment of semi-autonomous clusters or teams of teachers and students produced schools within a school work arrangements. Broadened teaching roles and increasing informal lines of communication were often contributing factors in moving ideas to application. The development of a change process about which increasing numbers of staff became knowledgeable also contributed to the readiness and efficiency of these schools' ability to adopt new approaches. Within these schools' learning environment, two points of emphasis are noted: first, the belief that teachers can shape the future of the school. Secondly, a focus on student benefits and student learning can produce early results which give momentum and provide a more fertile landscape for the planting of future seeds of innovation.

Summary of Results:

1. The study of two middle schools reinforced the importance of envisioning, energizing and enabling in bringing about innovation (Nadler). While there is much in the idea and illumination (envisioning) stage that is attributed to the role and actions of principals, a deeper look illustrates the significant role of teachers who also shape new ideas and insure that the context of the change fits the situation and the culture. This was the case at West Middle Schools' use of a task force to direct the implementation of student peer discussion groups. Similarly, the foundation of the faculty council at Shepard Middle school was based on teacher initiative and influence. While formal leaders appear to be the catalyst for energizing staff, these schools experienced a ripple effect whereby early adopters and advocates influenced other teachers. This appears to result in pockets of commitment and ultimately an increased level of psychological energy throughout the school. The enabling process of opening paths, reducing obstacles and securing resources was particularly evident in the West Middle School where unusual efforts were made to change "the way we do things." Efforts were made to separate the school from the established system and to make things happen which people previously didn't think were possible. Securing early results with teacher and student benefit appeared to provide a key stimulus to try something new.
2. The innovations studied (student peer group discussion and faculty council) grew out of both long range strategies for improvement as well as a perceived shift in school culture and values.
3. Understanding each school's culture was important to those interviewed, but it did not prevent the agents of change from moving rapidly in instituting first level innovations. "You can't wait for people to be ready".
4. Early resistance to new ideas ("the moan and groan stage") was not always representative of the faculty's receptivity to the change. For many teachers and administrators at Shepard and West, this was the natural incubation stage of change and they view being critical as essential to clarifying meaning for themselves.
5. It was apparent from the interview data with teachers and assistant principals that these principals understood change process and built parallel systems of change. Each innovation started with a small group who was receptive and willing to learn the process (which was later replicated on a

larger scale through formation of task forces and committees.) Thus a critical mass was established which gained momentum within each school.

6. Individuals of different and contrasting influence styles (adapters-organized and detail oriented and innovators-creative types) emerge at different stages of these innovations. The principal and a few innovative (envisioning) types often drive the early process. Many teachers attributed early ideas to the principal and several early users. This was generally followed by teachers who began to build a coalition to work on the innovation (engaging). The interview data suggested that the skills at these different stages were complimentary, but distinct. The style differences were described around the student discussion groups, leading to self examination (adaptive reflective types). Ultimately, the organized (adaptor/concrete) insures that there is closure. They assume responsibility for agendas, meetings, resources and providing feedback.
7. A number of significant student and teacher benefits are attributed to these innovations. This appeared to be the case with student discussion groups, cluster teams, no bell policy, and integrating special education students. It appears more difficult to assess benefit in the early stages of structural changes, such as a shared decision process (faculty council), something schools should consider when embarking on restructuring.
8. Individual group and organizational change appear to be by-products of innovations in these schools. People emerge from their involvement with different expectations. They have a different view of the school, themselves and their colleagues. They appear to have accelerated their learning process. Many staff detailed cases of how significant experiences with innovation led to greater sense of self awareness, confidence and a desire to continue to grow, which was demonstrated in their continued involvement in change. Individual and organizational learning were significant, often unexpected benefits of school change.
9. There is, according to a number of staff interviewed, a cost to producing innovations in these schools. Some polarization of faculty; early isolation from the rest of the system; over dependence on early advocates, resulting in internal friction and politics; heightened emotions and increased potential for conflict; and for many, a sense of chaos during early stages.
10. Leadership, in many forms, is evident in the movement of an idea to actual use. Structural changes (task forces, teams, reporting relations, information

flow) seemed to have created conditions for innovation. Achieving integration between staff and removing isolation was a critical leadership function. Long-range strategy preceded individual initiatives. Part-whole relations between innovations seemed to fit and thus ideas which were adopted had complementary value. Teachers described how they developed and used skills in articulating positions, being persuasive, persistent, and able to negotiate and synthesize ideas. Accordingly, the staff report that in acquiring these skills they have a heightened sense of competence. With many individuals with whom I spoke, there was a desire to demonstrate this competence in new ventures. The issues of fairness and objectivity were raised on numerous occasions and often with emphasis by teachers. The belief that, "We all get treated the same way" was important. On the other side of issues, the suspicion of manipulation or coercion was felt to have an unsettling impact and was a distraction to change efforts. The change or shift in attitude among key individuals tended to influence the prevailing school climate in ways that were important to on-going change. The linkage between individual attitudes, structural and cultural change was not easily definable, but the cumulative effect should influence the innovation process in these school settings.

In exercising influence and in managing innovation, many teachers appeared to sustain reciprocal relations with administrators. They worked out a form of partnership which constituted an exchange of their own commitment for psychological freedom, discretion in how to take the idea forward, and the sense of owning the project. This belief system is captured in comments such as "People feel like professionals, awakened for the first time, we can try new ideas, we have a say in how the place is run."

Summary of Literature:

The factors, behaviors and characteristics of organizations that stimulate or impede innovation have received broad coverage in the literature. In schools the process of change and innovation was well documented by Fullan (1983) Havelock (1970), Rogers and Shoemaker (1971). School innovation in these earlier studies often focused on wide scale dissemination and local adoption of externally initiated interventions (Fullan 1985). Little's (1981) research focused on work conditions and cultural variables which are supportive of staff development and school improvement. School norms that produced teacher informal talk about instructional practice, rather than on personal problems, weaknesses or on social lives, created a shared language for understanding the complexity of instruction. Such

schools then had a greater capacity for careful selection of new instructional approaches. Van Der Vegt and Knip (1988) conducted research in the Netherlands concerning the way in which schools organized for the task of implementing change. They found that while direction given by administrators was a primary change strategy, it did not correlate with change in classroom practices.

The analysis of barriers to innovation has been reviewed by Isaacson (1986) and Becker and Whisler (1967), Drucker (1985) and Quinn, (1986). Studies by Hage and Aiken (1970) highlight the problem with isolation or stratification of roles within organizations. Quinn (1985) noted the importance of leadership and the need for direct involvement of top management in supporting innovation. Lortie (1988), in a study of Illinois principals, revealed the pattern of success of principals is based on operating effectively within the current system and not departing from the way things are routinely done. This maintenance of the status quo is a strong barrier to major changes within schools.

In this study, I have sought to trace the source of stimulus for innovation in two schools which have experienced a high rate of change. (Drucker, 1985). At Shepard and West it was apparent that innovation was discontinuous, not following a smooth series of events and that it happened in spurts. While the financial conditions of the schools had a major impact on school climate, I was reminded from the readings on innovation that there is a correlation with increased number of innovations and downturns in the economy (Girifalco, 1985). This was largely the case with these two sites where, despite a heightened awareness of the financial cuts, the staff remained committed to the process of improvement. Another observation that was supported by the literature was that effective innovations have been observed to start small (Drucker, 1985) and are the result of focused efforts and determination to proceed.

Formalization, including specific rules and procedures (Rogers, 1983) and reporting lines of authority, generally has a negative effect on innovation. It was found that low formalization was linked to initiation of ideas and proposals and high formalization related positively to adoption and implementation (Pierce and Delbecz, 1977). Ultimately, my research examined the impact of leadership actions on the process of innovation in schools. While much has been written about one person's influence on another, there is little in the literature about the impact of leadership on innovation. (Fullan, 1983, Van Der Vegt and Knip, 1988).

Selecting Innovations:

During the first series of interviews in each school I was able to sort out a range of innovations offered by the teachers. I made a decision to pursue in some depth the

background of one innovation in each school, although I secured general descriptions of the sources and steps involved in instituting other related changes. This focus allowed me to cross reference people's perceptions and to gauge the impact of the change as well as to describe the context in which innovation occurred in the school. It also enabled me to focus on the constellation of actions, decisions and behaviors that contributed to moving ideas to application.

Discussion and Interpretation:

West Middle School:

The West Middle School is an attractive modern building which houses some 400 students grades 6 through 8. It is located in a suburban town which has a mix of blue collar and professional population. While there are pockets of wealth, the students at West come from predominantly working class families. The school, built in the late 70's, is a clean, well lit facility with modern library, gymnasium and cafeteria. It was fortunate that on the first morning in which I began the interviewing, the student peer group discussions were being reinstated. This turned out to be the principle innovation which I studied. In taking a preliminary tour of the building, I was able to view the various seating arrangements of student groups with teachers, counselors and administrators. I observed a range of classroom models from traditional rows of students facing the teacher to the more typical half circle arrangements. There appeared to be a considerable amount of student participation and in several classes I could hear laughter. The process seemed orderly, informal and relaxed. My early impressions of this were associated with a definite focus on children. The objectives of change centered largely around children. The innovations discussed and the concern for improvement are, apparently, a response to student needs. The teachers I interviewed mentioned students frequently in their discussion of changes at the school. A teacher's comment, "students are at the top of our organizational chart" seemed to fit with my view of this school.

I found the office staff as well as teachers at West be informal, friendly, and interested in the study. I was impressed by their fundamental orientation to students. Most references to new programs or changes in school schedules and structure were a response to student needs. The idea of a student discussion group emerged from a number of innovations including the elimination of bells, the development of clusters or teams of teachers with control over their schedules, a program of student rewards and recognition and the integration of special education students into regular education classes. While a simple concept, the reduction in formalization (elimination of bells) had a triggering effect on other ideas within cluster teams. According to most of the staff I interviewed, the student peer discussion groups were a response to student/teacher relations. Further, the

staff was seeking a vehicle which could bring them closer to students. Harold, former principal, had, according to a number of teachers, embarked on a school climate survey which revealed a need to improve student/teacher relationships.

Shepard Middle School:

My entry and the coordination of data gathering was done at Shepard primarily through the principal, Les Heron. It was interesting that all of the meetings except for one and total the interviewing process was arranged in the principal's office. I found this helpful and efficient. It may have attached a degree of importance to the study, but it also had overtones of centralization of control. I found the office support staff to be cordial and professional. They were slightly more formal than in other schools I had visited. This may be consistent with the principal's style.

The Shepard Middle School is an attractive building constructed in the late 1960's and housing impressive gymnasium and library facilities. It has slightly more than 400 students. Located in a middle class, suburban community where most families are professionals and business people, the community has a reputation for supporting education.

Description of Key Innovations:

West Middle School (Student Peer Discussion Groups)

The initial series of interviews at West influenced my decision to focus on the student peer group discussion process because it was an innovation that had school wide impact and it was in the early stages of use. I observed this program in process on my first day of interviewing. All students meet in small groups of approximately fifteen for forty minutes. Meeting every two weeks, the teacher acted as a facilitator of discussion, and a theme or topic was selected to guide discussion. This session allowed students to air opinions, concerns and thoughts on school issues. It was intended to improve relationships (cut the distance) between students and teachers and to improve the interpersonal relations between students.

The following descriptive account of the source and development of the innovation can be useful in understanding patterns of influence, structure, decision-making and levels of participation in these schools.

I traced the origin of the student peer discussion group to several sources. First, teachers acknowledged that the movement of change began when Harold, the former principal, (departed this past September) came to West and instituted a middle school philosophy. "He opened up the school, increased the level of expectations and the level of tension and asked us to rethink our old assumptions about educating junior high students." External resources are often the stimulus for new ideas. I learned this from a guidance

counselor who attended a conference on student advisee programs, which produced a recommendation to the principal. The principal was an advocate of professional growth and he encouraged participation in professional meetings. It was at his suggestion that the counselor attend this specific meeting. This demonstrates the importance of developing a core group of early initiators who advocate for ideas and new approaches.

In order to gather data on school perceptions and areas of need, Harold introduced a climate instrument to the management team which was used to assess the organizational health of the school. The study examined perceptions of students, faculty, and administration. It dealt with the essential school operations and interpersonal connections in the school which impact on the organization's climate. I learned that prior to this study, the principal had formed a management team of fourteen volunteers. This phase illustrates the administrative strategy for establishing broad participation to surface problems or need areas as a way of legitimizing the introduction of program innovations. The development of a core group of early initiators who advocate for ideas and successful practices is a strategy used by both principals in generating early momentum for change.

Counselors and teachers recounted the next steps. This begins the engagement stage, where the management team used the data from this survey and conducted a preliminary analysis. They presented the data to the faculty by arranging small groups who worked on one of twelve subtopics from the climate study.

There was a general agreement that the faculty established three main areas of priority: security/maintenance, student recognition, and student peer relationships. Task forces were then formed by volunteer teachers who were given the authority to develop recommendations for improvement in each area.

Russ and Ron, two faculty who played leadership roles in the student discussion task force, moved the group through a series of discussions leading to the idea of an advisee program. (They described people with different styles influencing the adoption of the innovation at different stages.) I was informed that the program was centered on forming groups of students with discussions facilitated by a teacher or administrator. The task force then developed a position paper and guidelines for conducting student peer discussion groups. I learned from Jane, a science teacher on the committee, that the task force was conscious of the "staff's considerable reluctance to become counselors." Thus, they low keyed the advisee role and referred to them always as student peer discussion groups. They made a decision to lower resistance to the innovation and revealed their growing skill at using change strategy.

According to Russ, the task force leader, "we brainstormed a way to get them to buy in." The staff used an in-service day and role modeled a student discussion scenario.

appeared that the members of the task force built their own team unity when they went outside of the usual predictable school behavior and used humor to overcome staff resistance. They also crafted a way to deal openly with questions and concerns. The role play according to Russ and Ron, the co-task force leaders, served to unfreeze the staff. The discussion which followed and the written guidelines for conducting a student discussion group helped increase teacher acceptance of the program. Concerning the impact on the audience of faculty, they responded, "They laughed, heads were nodding, they thoroughly enjoyed the humor and the reality of the issues students would present us with."

Shortly after this in-service session the task force announced plans for instituting the first student peer discussion groups. Teachers were given scripts and guidelines for operating the groups. This structure provided themes for discussion such as rights and privileges. It was a strategy which according to task force members "offered support while reducing teachers' responsibility." Early in the program, the feedback has been positive and teachers became encouraged. "We saw the kids in a different light." A comment from the acting principal "The kids take off, you present a topic and they talk and we listen."

The program, most agreed, supports and is consistent with the shift toward child development and building a sense of community; two key ingredients in moving toward to a middle school philosophy. Later in this paper I will comment on the process and product/benefit factors which are part of this innovation.

Shepard Middle School (Faculty Council - Shared Decision-making):

The development of the faculty council, a shared decision-making intervention at Shepard, is part of an ongoing series of major changes in the Shepard Middle School. I found it to be the most widely discussed issue among a number of innovations cited by staff and it was the primary structural change in the school restructuring effort. Essentially, the faculty council is a group of teachers and specialists who are elected by their teams to represent the staff as "a decision making body for the effective operation of the school." The following account, like the profile of West Middle School, highlights events, patterns of influence, and strategy which moved ideas to action.

The principal, Les Heron, recounted the major changes which he "brought in" during his first year. "I felt I had a mandate from the school committee and superintendent. I wasn't here to maintain the system." He talked about "dismantling the junior high structure and putting teams in place of subject areas." He related the conversion of team leaders from the former department heads and an arrangement whereby he met with cluster leaders weekly "to establish the middle school perspective."

According to Les, these changes, and a number of program and in-service adaptations marked a rapid shift in the schools operation and identity.

Les, the assistant principal, and several teachers I interviewed, defined Less' function as the driving force for constructive change. Other staff affirmed that he was the source of many new ideas, including the restructuring of the school and the transformation to middle school. "He's a visionary, a very bright and energetic person." When I asked Les about his role he reflected a moment and then said with confidence, "I'm the point guard." I thought this is probably both accurate, a point of contention for some staff members. I asked him to elaborate. With little hesitation, his voice rose "I set up the plays...you encourage it...you pass the ball to the right person...you keep the focus. You're the keeper of the dream, you try to be convincing." I considered the descriptiveness of this statement and what it said about the school change process and the principal. He seems to enjoy center stage. A discussion of how the principal changed and was influenced by teachers followed. Les, according to one of the informal leaders in the school, has grown in his job, and as one teacher said, "he was in the early stages sometimes out of sync with the staff, pushing his ideas at times when they didn't see the need or have the energy or time to respond."

Two staff members, Holly and Marilyn, suggested that when teachers increased their own level of influence outside the classroom, they gave Les constructive feedback and "he accepted it and really has made an effort to see our perspective." This highlights an important leadership behavior, the development of reciprocal relations, a fundamental element in expanding influence opportunity and in moving toward increased power equalization.

Les recounts the triggering event which opened his eyes to a number of opportunities for the schools' future improvement. "I was selected as a Leadership Academy Fellow in the pioneer group." He said the experience led to his building an external and networking with a wide variety of educators. One significant contact was made with a European high school which had begun the process of shared decision-making. The ideas for Shepard's faculty council originated, in part, from this experience. I later refer to this as a parallel system of change, when the agent experiences change and then replicates the model by building coalitions within the schools.

Marilyn, an experienced special needs teacher, offered, "We were in the teachers room in late spring having a discussion about the end of the school year. Our discussion became heated concerning the school plan for the final day of school." She believed the frustration and inability to bring closure to the issue led to a series of informal conversations concerning governance and teacher input in the school. A review of the

interview data indicated that the backdrop for these events also created conditions for this change. While these events were taking place, it was apparent that the school was experiencing a new set of influence groups. Grade level teams were meeting regularly and becoming more a part of the daily information link. The combination of events and decision related to the Shepard School as it experienced the illumination stage of innovation. Several teachers began informal discussion with the principal, resulting in the topic of shared governance being discussed at a faculty meeting. From several sources, it then appeared that a period of incubation and mulling over this idea took place. A study committee of four or five teachers and the principal made a presentation to the faculty and after considerable discussion the council was voted on affirmatively by about 85% of the faculty." The council, according to Marilyn and Les, was to be a group of 7 staff representing each of the teams. Teams elected a representative and the principal sat as a non-voting member. Ultimately, the council would discuss and decide upon issues relating to the operation of the school, rules, goals, curriculum and in-service plans.

A staff member recounting the first year of this decision-making group, "It allowed us to get out feet wet and Les coached us in terms of keeping the meetings on target." According to Kelvin, an industrial arts teacher and the current chair, the council in its first year dealt with "more detail, mechanical issues in its first year and in this second year the council has taken several strategic issues such as determining faculty role in assuming responsibility for the school budget." Mike, a social studies teacher, and a council participant, remarked about the initial gains and problems. A somewhat neutral observer according to several other staff, Mike suggested that, "the council has opened the school up and made it much more participatory. The debate over teachers role in the budget is a good example of faculty being able to air their views and shape a consensus outcome."

After the initial pilot year, the faculty voted to continue the council operations with periodic review. During the current year the council proposed that the staff become more directly involved in critical decisions such as the development of the annual school budget. This is supported in a review of council minutes during the 1989-90 year I learned there was considerable early resistance to the budget idea. However, the faculty voted to approve the establishment of a standing budget committee made up of two faculty council representatives and three other staff. On reflection, I considered the meetings leading up to the decision as having the effect of shaping the council members learning. To gain the confidence of the faculty they needed to present an objective view of both sides of the proposal. Teachers indicated that Martin, the vice-principal, helped serve as a conscience consultant to the faculty council. He urged them to rethink their presentation, to objectify their report. Subsequently, when they presented a more balanced report, they secured an

affirmative faculty vote of the budget committee. The importance of objectivity and fairness has been recounted on a number of occasions by teachers and highlights the importance of integrity in building a foundation for change.

Related Innovations and Analysis:

While beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that in each school, staff made reference to a series of innovations which are often interconnected. At the West Middle School this included the elimination of bells, initially accompanied by a considerable degree of faculty skepticism. The comment, "it was one of the best ideas we have incorporated" reflected the sentiment of all the teachers interviewed. "It makes the school calm and allows teachers to control the schedule." Pat, the guidance counselor, went on to say, "it has resulted in the students taking responsibility for maintaining a more sophisticated decorum."

At West, the development of teams, the introduction of task forces, and the mainstreaming of special education students into regular education were all related to a shift from a subject oriented junior high to a developmental middle school approach toward education.

At Shepard and at West Middle School, the principal directed most of the early changes. The innovations that were most often discussed included, establishment of independent grade level teams, a critical thinking peer coaching program, an alternative program called Venture, and the faculty council and school budget committee. These changes also represent a shift toward what the principal and several staff called school restructuring, a term used by many of the staff. I came to understand that while there were various interpretations of restructuring, a majority believed that restructuring signified major change in how the school operates, including expanded involvement of teachers in setting direction and reacting to problems. This was consistent with current initiatives including school based management, and teacher empowerment.

The connections between the innovations in each school are not accidental, they appear to be a part of a strategy that was developed by the principals and ultimately influenced and shaped by individual teachers who exercised influence and integration. Faculty comments concerning these principals: (The following remarks reflect views about these principals).

"He was a person who introduced ideas...and he had people take an active part and he worked behind the scenes. He would see to it that there was follow-up and he offered encouragement...he planted the seed and then stepped back and let others grow and harvest it."

..."the idea came from the principal...the atmosphere here...high energy a sense of empowerment, I can have a say in how they run the building."

..."He initiates, he is creative and gets things going...he's learning to stand back more. The place was upset with the speed of change...he had us over stimulated and we wanted him to stop loading on...He suggested we would have to pick and choose"...His response, "If these issues are important enough, people will get it done. He did not back off."

When teachers took on greater influence roles and began to voice their opinions and develop and influence new ideas, there became a reciprocal form of leader behavior.

"I learned a lot of things. I know I can get things done. We expected that we can make things better."

"We communicated our concerns and told him we need time. Teachers deal with change emotionally and then intellectually...they go through moan and grown phase."

"The core of the movement (faculty decision-making) is expanding..there is a strategy and people recycle and take on responsibility."

In this kind of relationship a form of partnership appears to evolve between administration and staff. Further, it appeared that accompanying a clear strategy around tasks and activities was an effort to reshape values and to alter the culture of the school. Values such as cooperation, openness, consensus, fairness, student focus, represented a shift away from earlier segmentation, turf issues, compliance, subject focus, and special interests. Some interview excerpts:

"Ideas are welcomed...We can try new things...its an open door."

"I feel like a professional...we're treated as adults, like someone who has a brain"...and..."people do it for the kids."

Product/Benefits of Innovations

In examining the two primary innovations studied it was difficult to assess the benefit to students. The faculty council and the budget committee which grew out of the council-shared decision process are structural innovations which do not have an impact directly on students. The benefit appears to some as largely interpersonal and organizational. They have achieved a greater degree of openness and information is made accessible to all staff. It is difficult to determine if the quality of decision-making has improved through the council's activity, but most agree that the acceptance of ideas and implementation are greatly improved. "We are much more a team"...and "this is highly participatory." Additional benefits raised by teachers were, the "sense of seeing the whole school rather than just your classroom."

It would appear that seeing the parts and their relationship to the whole, is an asset to any decision-making group. Further, teachers who took central roles in innovations became more aware of external resources and the larger educational community.

Holly at Shepard comments on by-products, "It gave me a sense of growth... it is stimulating...I understand others and myself better, it (change) magnifies issues, pushes up the speed of learning. My vision has expanded...when I see more or the whole in the front of me I see the system, the big picture and not just my classroom." Several teachers recounted similar experiences with broadening their scope and involvement.

The student peer discussion group at West Middle School has an expectation of student benefits. Russ comments: "We wanted to improve student interpersonal relations and we wanted to personalize our own experience with children." This program is described by the acting principal Phillip "in its infancy." Recent sessions resulted in considerable discussion concerning a list of student recommendations. Later, a series of task force meetings dealt with student suggestions for changes growing out of the discussion groups. Most faculty see this as a very effective program. "It reduces distance between staff and students, lets us really see them as individuals." There is some indication that student relations have improved although it is too early to measure this change. The evidence comes from the number of student referrals for discipline and counseling and from general teacher observations. The positive momentum from this program also produces a sense of confidence among the staff in that it responds constructively to problems.

As is the case with teachers at Shepard, West teachers are increasingly learning how to direct projects and to navigate through the schools' structure to get things done. Jane reflected on her task force's initial proposal to offer student discussion groups. "We developed a strategy to reduce resistance...We used humor and we were conscious of their (teachers') reluctance."

A more direct and measurable result has come from the most basic innovation...the removal of bells. The product of the former principal's thinking, this was an innovation which many felt was unworkable. Doris, "I didn't believe in it and I thought it would create all kinds of problems." "It has worked far beyond any of our expectations." Same industrial psychologists make reference to the expectation concept, whereby workers strive to live up to the supervisors expectations. This simple change in operation is symbolic of the early stages of West's moving away from the more formalized traditional junior high, toward a child development, student centered approach to education. People seem to be saying...this is a community, a place to learn. We are all empowered to determine how we will learn...the absence of controlling devices opens the possibility that teachers and

students will enjoy a greater degree of discretion. All the staff at West agree this actually has occurred. This elimination of bells opened many eyes and ears and enabled the process of change to be legitimized for even the most reluctant members.

Student Focus:

I was impressed by this school's continued focus on students. The changes which had been instituted were largely efforts to improve the student learning environment...from special education integration, student recognition program to the discussion groups and removal of bells. The teacher who chaired the task force on student relationships offered with emphasis "students are on the top of the organization chart." This is not a minor issue. The focus on children seems to sustain the process of change at West Middle School.

Process Issues (individual change and cultural issues)

There were numerous references to the impact which these changes had on individual staff members. Comments such as "When you're working at your best you are the most productive and creative", "I've learned it's o.k. to take risks and be responsible for the results."..."He (the principal) encouraged us to go to conferences, to learn about current issues and get outside of Northhove." The developmental and catalyst role of school leaders was cited on numerous occasions.

It was captured in a second year special needs teacher, who spoke of Les, the principal, "He said my idea was great and go and do it. I thought he must be testing me to see if I will take the responsibility and carry it out and not just be blue skying with him." "I learned to live up to the freedom he gave me."....Russ (chair of the student relations task force).

"I learned a great deal about change from Harold, he treated me like an adult for the first time I felt like a professional. I would talk to him and he listened, he wouldn't take it personally. I was learning and figuring out how to do this but he trusted me...so I'm motivated. Les introduced new ideas and he had people take an active part and he worked behind the scenes..he would see to it that the plan was followed up on. Philip, although he's new, gives me space. He's easy to deal with, he's not threatened."

At least half of the teachers I interviewed volunteer a similar perspective. They felt revitalized and they pointed to how being treated as a professional was a key motivating factor.

The following characterized them

..."When we see someone doing it (innovation) we feel the momentum. Harold was such a catalyst, he had energy, he directed us through critical situations and he set up structures...he sent us off to conferences, gave us readings (unfreezing process). I was

dying...I need a change...I would follow him...I learned a lot...I know how to go about this...I can do it on my own. We're expected to do things, after a while you feel you need to continue...it's expected that we will improve, find a better way. I've learned about persistence, you have to hang in there and persevere, that's how we change things."

I thought, a true convert, but someone who has, according to this, contributed a great deal. She is viewed as a leader in the school who developed this profile during the process of change.

The Cost of Producing Innovations:

Efforts to bring about innovation and the process by which innovation is undertaken has a cost. The early initiatives of principals has strategic benefits but may be also perceived by others as being controlling. Thus principals' initiatives allow issues to be focused and created energy but these actions paradoxically produce early resistance from those comfortable with current conditions. I thought a great deal about the way I have seen these two schools and the impact of leadership style on my own access to people and information. The informality of one school appears as an agent for releasing ideas and proposals, while the formal, organized style of the other may help produce sound implementation and follow-up.

An innovation which came early at Shepard was the peer coaching and critical thinking program for faculty. While most staff were said to be supportive...there were reported undercurrents, suggesting that while it was stated to be voluntary, some staff assumed you were noticed if you were not "on board".

Similarly, at West, Leslie came down on the negative side when asked about how things were done she said, "it was orchestrated by Harold, he had an agenda." I asked if it was working...she acknowledged it was successful, but at a cost of trust and some fear of retaliation if you didn't get on board.

Her reaction contrasts with Kevin, who in his first full year at Shepard is now the current chair of the faculty council. "I had been part time here in industrial arts and I knew we were vulnerable if there were cuts...I decided to get involved and so I ran for representative from the special areas cluster. I got nominated, elected and then chosen chair. I think it's important to be visible and to have some impact on decisions made in the school."

I sensed the exhilaration and a freeing-up of people who spoke of enlarging their professional horizons and raising their commitment, but also a degree of frustration among some staff at the demands which these innovations made on them. Some staff objected to the process and spoke of the need for time. Further, the innovations tested old norms about how relationships are formed and preserved. "We no longer just focus on our class.

People learned a great deal about themselves and others in a relatively short period of time." (Holly, Russ and Marilyn) Some obviously benefited from this learning, but others may not have been as comfortable. During periods there was some polarization of staff both around ideology and a relationships.

Leadership and Innovation

The formal aspects of leadership, as demonstrated by the principals, team leader and assistant principals, was discussed and observed directly. While a position suggests certain authority and power relationships, leader behavior went beyond the scope of role expectations.

Some comments by faculty concerning Harold, the former principal at West included: "he challenged the system...he made it open...he created a tension here by suggesting possibilities." "I came to respect his purpose...he is knowledgeable and well informed about middle schools, open articulate, he stimulated and energized us to get out and see successful practices."

The present acting principal, Philip who was assistant principal with Harold..."Harold stayed behind the scenes, he enjoyed getting things started...not much in attending to detail...I did much of that and frankly I didn't mind. I got a hell of an education during those four years." Philip related an interesting profile of Harold as a person with deep pocket. "We had occasional staff socials at local restaurants. Harold always picked up the tab for the entire group. He never stayed long...just made an appearance and left early...he didn't hang in to get the attention. The next day in school, though, he really enjoyed hearing that people had a great time"...and..."I remember when he first came to town, Don, the other assistant, and I were quite distant and not sure what to expect. Don didn't want to be here...he had unsuccessfully applied for the job. But Harold was fair he wanted everyone to have an opportunity and for everyone to be treated the same...In that first month despite our giving him a cold shower he sent Don, the assistant principal, to the National Middle School Conference in Florida...that was unheard of in this community...and I know he paid for part of it out of his own pocket...the guy was amazing."

This principal understood something about unfreezing and engaging people, the building of parallel systems of change (starting with a core group and creating a critical mass starts with one key relationship). Done came to the school as an opponent of Harold an returned from the middle school conference as a colleague.

Comments concerning Les, the principal at Shepard: "He is very bright, articulate ...has a plan and a purpose...he thinks in global ways...the guy is unbelievably creative...he grows ideas." "His problem may be that he is always thinking of new

approaches while we are in the trenches...by the time we finish teaching and he's got all these ideas, we are dragging and he's flying with suggestions. They're great but we can't always keep up. He has toned things down and is more in touch with us. We talk to him about this and I think he's really trying to see our point of view. He's grown a lot in the job, he often took things personally...a little emotional...now he tried to back off...he's learning."

Marilyn's assessment "much of the change came from Les, he ignites the changes."

Mike, "The innovation...it came from Les, he pushed it...he surfaces ideas...discusses them at faculty meetings...participation is voluntary...a few teachers indicated that they think voluntary is mandatory. He makes it clear if you want to...it's your choice...then your responsibility."

Holly, "Les is the prime key figure in innovation in this school, he is active and supportive..he has support of key people."

Comments about assistant principals: "He is open, approachable...never gets defensive...likes follow through and is straight with you. He is more cautious may be what we need now."

Kevin, commenting about Bob, the assistant at Shepard..."he helped us get through a stalemate on the budget committee, he quietly gave us feedback that we were presenting something without letting the staff hear the other side. We became more objective and that made a big difference in securing faculty support...he's a conscience."

I considered the "stream" metaphor used by a teacher to describe change at Shepard...It's like a stream. Some move rapidly in the main current and they are the movers and fast trackers for change. Others are neutral like rocks at the bottom of the stream...not going anywhere in a hurry and then there are those that cling to the sides of the stream...resistors."

The Leaders Behaviors (administrators that seem to support innovation) include:

- ...An ability to set direction and a plan that could be understood and have meaning for the staff.
- ...A sense of strategy and instituting a process of change...anticipating barriers and limited resources while setting conditions for change to take hold.
- ...Works behind the scenes once ideas are generated. This is part of working a parallel system whereby administrators seek to develop a change team and then build a base of task forces around those teams to set up a critical mass and momentum to support the innovation.
- ...Perceived as being fair, treating people as equals and being objective. Attracting people by consistency and fairness.

- ...Demonstrating coolness and concern: emotional competence, not getting personally attached or defensive when barriers develop.
- ...Developer of others, invests in learning of staff and stimulating new thinking and new practices. Ultimately relies on organizational learning as a condition for change.
- ...Learns to listen, is approachable and treats us as professionals...wants to hear what we think.
- ...Takes risks and allows us to take them.
- ...Provides support when it gets difficult, supports from behind the scenes.
- ...Stimulates and acts as a catalyst of ideas...stimulates psychological energy and a feeling that we can do it.
- ...Sets up structures which create conditions for innovations to take hold.

The most often discussed leadership actions that created barriers include:

- ...Appearances of manipulation...giving the appearance that we give teachers free choice but with an undercurrent of consequences.
- ...Becoming too emotional, taking it personally
- ...Being controlling
- ...Being too certain and not approachable
- ...Being above the fray and not connected to the people in the trenches
- ...Not having a direction and philosophy
- ...Not being in tune to our energy level or the pace of change

Informal Aspects of Leadership Behavior (teacher/specialist)

Throughout this paper there are references to teachers' efforts in initiating activity in shaping decisions, in serving as advocates or acting as critics. Teachers often led and at other times followed. But the kind of follower that seemed to have impact was active, assertive, articulate, independent and even critical. Most often they were learners who got out in front and lived off the adventure of shaping new results and new directions in a school. Informal aspects of leadership behavior are sometimes referred to as influence without authority.

It was evident from the manner in which teachers in the student discussion task force used role playing and humor at the in-service that they had developed skills at overcoming resistance in anticipating apprehension. Similarly, teachers who led the recent struggle to establish a budget committee at Shepard learned how to objectify their presentation and to pay attention to how they were being looked at by their colleagues.

The descriptors for teacher influence included: "he is persistent and he offers support and encouragement"..."he coaches"...about Russ, the chair of the student

discussion task force..."he is an excellent teacher, well-respected, a coach and an articulate person in this school"..."he has a track record and we all know he is effective with student...he has credibility and he takes responsibility." Others at Shepard talked about teachers being effective because of the ability to "synthesize, to negotiate differences, to navigate in difficult situation." The importance of being perceived as having a track record, being a productive teacher and being articulate, able to define and persuade, were frequently mentioned as skills that made staff effective in initiating and in supporting innovation. A quality that few commented on directly but was implied from their responses about the implementation was the ability to follow through, to see the project get results and to keep others engaged.

Summary: The paradoxes of school innovation

Some reflections from this study concerning what is often complex and paradoxical about school change, developing ideas and making them work for the benefit of students, teachers and community.

1. The need to structure creativity and innovation. Innovation doesn't happen out of good intentions. It appears to require integrating devices and connections that should be part of a structure and routine in the school.
2. Bringing degrees of chaos to order: Routine behavior can have a draining effect on educators, yet these schools have predictable routines especially degrees of uncertainty, discomfort and adventure which can be sources of innovative action.
3. Sponsoring educational entrepreneurs while valuing adaptive management types. Schools need adaptors and innovators there are different roles at different stages of innovation.
4. Integrating staff diversity and maximizing a talent pool of uniquely different people. Diversity produces conflict but it also produces creativity. These schools seem to accept living with some controversy.
5. Stimulating discomfort about what exists yet providing security and safety for taking risks to change things. Envisioning requires breaking out of what exists but the next steps to change require support and for some collaboration.
6. Ordering innovation: seeking to link individual ideas and novel projects to an overriding theme or direction in the school. These principals had a plan or a view of desired state different from what had existed.
7. Long term perspective short term results: having a desired state helps but early results open the door to simulating more innovation. The 'no bell' system built credibility and receptivity to new ideas.

8. Taking care of detail and seeing the big picture: Teachers and administrators in these schools found ways of balancing these roles so that creativity was accompanied by follow through and accountability for results. School personnel are not tolerant of innovations that lack follow through.
9. Getting out in front and standing back: Knowing when to advocate ideas, when to listen, and when to let others carry the ball.
10. Doing what is right and fair: learning from mistakes: The new principal described the difference in attitude. "We used to be looking over our shoulders...afraid to hear about our mistakes. Now we have the confidence to move ahead on our own."

Finally, from the teachers and administrators of West and Shepard Middle schools, what may be the hidden curriculum of innovation...We are learning from change and changing from learning.

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